

THE GREAT MARQUIS.

CHAPTER IX.

“In the cause of right engaged,
 Wrongs injurious to redress,
 Honour's war we stoutly waged,
 But the heavens denied success ;
 Ruin's wheel has driven o'er us,
 Not a hope that dare attend,
 The wide world is all before us,
 But a world without a friend.”

Strathallan's Lament.

 E left our hero an exile in a foreign land ; but far from being discouraged by the failure of all his bright hopes, all his energies were now directed to the one object of saving the imprisoned king. Even after he had been compelled to lay down his arms and leave the country, he never ceased making projects to rescue him from his captivity. Before he sailed from Scotland, he sent his friend, Lord Crawford, to the queen, who was at Paris, to propose a scheme for liberating Charles, which he called the Engagement. Henrietta Maria would have nothing to say to it, and wrote to Montrose's friends in Scotland, that it was a mad scheme and quite useless. The moment soon passed away when such an attempt would have been possible. The Scots sold their sovereign to the English Parliament for 400,000*l.*, and the unfortunate Charles was immediately conveyed, under a strong guard of Fairfax's troops, to Holdenby House. Argyle received a large sum of money out of the price, 30,000*l.*, for his own share, and the same quantity was given to the Duke of Hamilton, that nobleman who had always professed so much love to the king. Hamilton, it must be remembered, had been imprisoned by the king for his treachery, but he was released after the battle of Naseby, and the king had received him kindly.

Montrose was at Hamburg meanwhile, waiting for an answer from the queen about the Engagement, when he received a letter from Charles desiring him to make the best of his way to Paris and consult with the queen personally. While he was on his journey, he was surprised by a visit from Sir John Ashburnham with a most curious proposal from Henrietta Maria. This was that he should now return

to Scotland alone, and declare war against the victorious Covenanters immediately. Montrose answered that it was perfectly impossible, and that he could not make war without regular letters or papers from the queen authorizing him to do so; that old Lord Huntly's rising had been put down; in short, that now it was too late, for the king was no longer in the hands of the Scots, but a prisoner in England. At all events, the Marquis was determined to obey his royal master's order, which he considered his first duty, and go to Paris. When he got there the queen saw him, but she would not pay attention to any of his projects for rescuing her husband, and puzzled him by giving him all sorts of contradictory orders.

Montrose was not much pleased at Henrietta's reception of him, and he kept away from court; but though her insignificant retainers slighted him he found a great admirer in the celebrated Cardinal de Retz, who compared him to the heroes of Plutarch's history. Montrose, finding the Court would have nothing to say to him, did not choose to stay long in France, and he was just about to leave it when news arrived of a plan concocted by Hamilton for rescuing the king from the English Parliament. The queen, who had refused to listen to the proposals of the loyal hero who had done and suffered so much for the royal cause, immediately threw herself into the arms of the man who had always betrayed it. The expedition ended, as all wise men foresaw, by the defeat of Hamilton at the battle of Preston, for though he thought himself a great general, he was no more a soldier than Argyle. He was taken prisoner by Cromwell, and died on the scaffold with a much better man than himself, a distinguished and gallant Cavalier, Arthur Lord Capel.

People have pitied Hamilton, and thought that because he was executed for the royal cause he was a devoted loyalist, but there never was a greater mistake. Hamilton was weak, selfish, and changeable he thought and cared for little but his own interests, and his advice did the greatest possible mischief to Charles's cause.

During these events, Montrose was travelling over Europe. Before he went away he gave his picture to his nephew, Napier: it was so small that it could be contained in the breadth of a sixpence. Napier got one of his wife, Lady Elizabeth, of the same size, and he wore these miniatures of the two beings he loved best on earth as long as he lived. In a postscript to a long letter to his wife the loving boy writes:—

“Be pleased, dear heart, to let me have one thing which I did almost

forget, your picture, in the breadth of a sixpence, without a case, for they may be had better and handsomer here, and I will wear it upon a ribbon under my doublet, so long as it (or I) lasts." And then he adds: "Montrose at his way-going gave me his picture, which I caused put in a gold case of the same bigness as I desire yours?"

The Marquis went to Geneva, passed through Switzerland and the Tyrol, where he probably stopped to admire the beauty of Innsprück and to gaze upon the tomb of one in whose romantic and imaginative character he might well recognise a kindred spirit, the chivalrous Maximilian I. He journeyed through Munich, that city through which, not many years before, Gustavus Adolphus, one of the greatest men of his age, had ridden, a conqueror. He passed by the majestic mountains that surround Salzburg, and perhaps sailed down the broad Danube, where then, as now, the old grey ruins of Dürrenstein, the prison of Cœur de Lion, under whose walls Blondel sang, frowned upon him from the heights, and at last on a summer evening he rode into Vienna. But the emperor whom Montrose wished to see was not there, and our hero followed him to Prague. Ferdinand III. received him most graciously, and made him a field-marshall of the empire. But it was not to receive compliments and honours from foreign princes that Montrose travelled into Germany; he asked permission from Ferdinand to raise levies of troops with which he might form an expedition for the service of his own unfortunate sovereign. Ferdinand granted him leave willingly, gave him orders to raise levies in Flanders, and recommended him to the kindness of his brother, the Archduke Leopold, governor of the Spanish Netherlands. Montrose having obtained what he wanted, delayed no longer in Austria, and set off for Flanders. But unfortunately all the direct roads were blocked up by Swedish and Saxon armies, for the Thirty Years' War was hardly over, and the Marquis was obliged to go a long way round by Hungary, Prussia, and Denmark, before he could reach Brussels. He arrived there about the end of the year 1648. But in January, 1649, took place an event which destroyed all the Marquis's hopes. A small body of men headed by Cromwell, and calling itself the English people, murdered their sovereign. The news of this national crime was a terrible shock to Montrose; when he heard it he vowed that he would avenge his royal master's death, and make every effort to place his son, the young Prince of Wales, upon the

throne. He then shut himself up in his room, and for two days refused to see any one.

I may as well here say a few words upon the state of Scotland at this moment. Argyle had all this time been great friends with Cromwell, and was allowed to remain dictator, as he called himself, or governor of Scotland. His great object was to persecute as much as possible the Malignants, as he called the faithful Royalists. The Marquis of Huntly, who, as I told you, tried to effect a rising for the king, was taken prisoner, and died on the scaffold. The aged nobleman met his death with a calm fortitude and courage which half atoned for the lukewarmness of his loyalty in life. Lord Aboyne succeeded him, but he did not long survive him; Aboyne seems to have been rather a weak and amiable youth, who was entirely led by his father. He is said to have died of grief for the murder of Charles I. That wild and fickle boy, Lord Ludovic, then became Marquis of Huntly; but Ludovic also died without children: two young brothers, Lord Charles and Lord Harry, remained; to Charles, the youngest but one of five brothers, the marquise at length descended.

Montrose was now at the court of the young king, Charles II., and had already received from him a commission making him lieutenant-general of all the troops that might be levied in Scotland. But the Presbyterian party there had again declared for the monarchy, and, to say the truth, when the Presbyterians sold the king to the Parliament, they had no desire to see him put to death. But it is a true saying that "the Presbyterians held him down while the Independents cut his throat;" meaning that the Presbyterians first rebelled against the king, and then let him fall into the hands of the Independents, who murdered him. At all events, Argyle did not like the thoughts of having a despotic master, such as Cromwell promised to be, and he consequently thought proper to proclaim Charles II. in Scotland. He sent to offer the crown to the young king, on condition that he would establish the Presbyterian form of worship, that he would entirely renounce all his royalist friends, and that he would sign the Solemn League and Covenant. The bearers of this offer were two noblemen, the new Duke of Hamilton, brother of the last, and the Earl of Lauderdale, one of the most immoral and unscrupulous men in Scotland; and who, though now a rigid Covenanter and Presbyterian, was twenty years later hated as the bitterest enemy and most cruel per-

secutor that the Covenanters ever had. They brought over the offer of their chief in a letter which contained great abuse of "James Graham, sometime Earl of Montrose," and begged Charles to send away the "excommunicated Montrose," as they politely called him. These insolent nobles even refused to remain in the presence-chamber with "that excommunicated traitor, James Graham," and indeed in one sense they were quite right to stay away, they were not worthy to kiss the ground he trod on. Charles, who was always exceedingly high-bred and courteous in his manners, was disgusted at the brutal and ungentlemanlike conduct of Lauderdale and Hamilton, and treated the Marquis with all the greater consideration.

Charles wished that Montrose and his opponents should talk over the question in his presence at the council, whether he should accept the offer of Argyle, but Lauderdale and his friends would not hear of this proposal. They had too small an amount of courage to encounter the searching look of those keen eyes or the unanswerable arguments that would flow from those eloquent lips. The king at length suggested to both parties to put down what they had to say in writing. Montrose then wrote his opinion on the subject to Charles, in which he earnestly renewed his entreaties to him not to accept the crown upon such conditions—conditions dishonourable not only to himself but also to his royal father's memory. Charles finally decided not to return a direct answer to the Covenanters yet, and meanwhile he gave Montrose secret orders to pursue any method he should think most advisable for promoting his interests.

CHAPTER X.

"A traitor sold him to his foes.
 O deed of deathless shame!
 I charge thee, boy, if e'er thou meet
 With one of Assynt's name—
 Be it upon the mountain's side
 'Or yet within the glen,
 Stand he in martial gear alone
 Or backed by armed men—
 Face him as thou wouldest face the man
 Who wronged thy sire's renown,
 Remember of what blood thou art
 And strike the caitiff down." AYTOOUN.

THE king went to Paris, and Montrose, still according to secret instructions from him, travelled to foreign courts to apply for assistance

to carry out the expedition he was planning. He kept writing, at the same time, to his friends in Scotland, and received from them constant assurances of devotion, and earnest invitations to hasten to Scotland himself.

So far the conduct of Charles was straightforward; but when he got to Paris he began to listen to the bad advice of the queen mother, and he consented to see the commissioners of Argyle and come to terms with them. Had he told the Marquis that he had taken this resolution, had he ordered him to lay down his arms, and informed him that he had made peace with the Presbyterian government, then at least he would have acted openly. Montrose would, of course, have been mortified, and would probably have opposed this course of conduct very strongly, but he would not have hesitated to obey.

But Charles did not do this: he allowed Montrose to carry on his preparations for leading an army against the Covenanters whilst he was keeping up an underhand correspondence with them. The young king's intention evidently was, to wait and see whether Montrose's expedition succeeded. In that case he would stand by him, but if he was defeated, then Charles intended to disown him, to proclaim that he had given him no orders, and to sacrifice him to his bitter enemies. Thus, even at nineteen, Charles began to show himself the selfish, careless prince who had no scruple in sacrificing the lives of his adherents if it was to promote his own interests. We shall see how the event turned out.

Charles meanwhile was writing to Montrose begging him to use all diligence in his proceedings, and approving strongly of all that he was doing. He also presented him with the Order of the Garter. Lord Napier was assisting his uncle during this time in collecting troops.

But Archibald was not quite ready, and Montrose, urged on by the repeated letters of Charles, thought it best not to wait for him, and early in the spring of 1651 he set sail for Scotland. He landed in the Orkneys, where his Scotch friends had assured him that he would find numbers ready to join him. His banner was black, and the motto was "Judge and avenge my cause, O Lord!"

Montrose soon discovered that he had been deceived by the foreign princes who had made him such magnificent promises and also by his too sanguine friends in Scotland. The people were too much afraid of the Dictator Argyle to join him. The result is, unhappily, but too

quickly told ; near Corbiesdale, on the borders of Ross-shire, he was attacked by an overwhelming force, led by General Strachan, David Leslie, the cruel conqueror of Philiphaugh, and the Earl of Sutherland. The day was only another Philiphaugh ; the Marquis fought, as he ever did, with desperate courage, but his small army was cut to pieces, he himself was soon severely wounded, and his horse killed under him. At this moment the young Viscount Frendraught, a youth devotedly attached to Montrose, though wounded himself, generously compelled his chief to mount upon his own charger, and make his escape.

Frendraught was the nephew of the Earl of Sutherland, and his life, therefore, was not in much danger ; in fact, the gallant boy was taken by his uncle to Dunrobin Castle ; where he was nursed of his wounds, and soon recovered.

It was five o'clock in the evening when Montrose left the field with a heavy heart. But in no part of Sutherlandshire could he hope to be safe from his merciless pursuers ; he took off his George and Garter and hid them under a tree ; they were found afterwards by the Covenanters, together with some of his letters. He was soon obliged to leave his horse, and for some days he wandered among the hills of Assynt, not daring to enter any of the hovels to ask for food. His friend the young Earl of Kinnoul, who had escaped with him, at length sank under these hardships, the poor youth declared he could go no further, and he lay down to die amidst the solitudes of those bleak mountains. At length the Marquis could no longer endure the sufferings of hunger : he had changed clothes with a peasant some days before, and he thought now that this disguise might allow him to venture into a herdsman's cottage near Assynt and ask for a little food. The man brought him some oatmeal and a bowl of milk ; but he looked curiously at the famished and weary Marquis, for by accident his coat blew open slightly, and discovered for a moment the embroidered waistcoat he wore under it.

Rumours of his flight, and of the vast rewards that had been offered for him had already reached the Highlands, and while Montrose was resting himself, the herdsman went down to the Castle of Assynt, an old, half-ruined building, where lived Macleod of Assynt, a man who had formerly served under Montrose. The herdsman told his suspicions to Macleod, who immediately went with him to his hut. Montrose had left it, but they easily tracked him, and soon came up

with him. Sorely wounded, worn out with fatigue and famine, the hunted nobleman had now no course left but to give himself up to Macleod, which he did with great mistrust, for he knew Macleod to be mean and avaricious, and other reports said he was savage and cruel also. But Macleod made all sorts of promises to Montrose, and the unfortunate hero followed him to that old castle which still looks over the quiet lake of Assynt, though the betrayed and betrayer have long since passed away for ever.

As soon as Macleod had got Montrose into his power, he threw him into one of the dungeons of the castle and sent information of his capture to the Scottish Estates. The exultation of the Parliament is not to be described. Macleod was immediately rewarded with four hundred bolls of meal for his base treachery, and a detachment of troops was sent up to fetch the Marquis to Edinburgh. From that moment Montrose knew that his fate was certain ; but he showed no agitation at the prospect, nor did he appear discomposed at the insults with which his guards treated him. An incident occurred, however, which has been remembered in the local traditions of Sutherlandshire, slight in itself, but which helped to lighten the sufferings of this most melancholy and painful journey, by showing him that there were yet some who dared to compassionate him in his fallen fortunes.

One evening his guards chose to stop at Skibo, a house belonging to a lady of Sutherlandshire, and pass the night there. She received them graciously and ordered supper to be prepared for them and their noble prisoner. As they were about to seat themselves at the board, Colonel Houghton, who commanded the soldiers, sat down in the seat of honour next to the lady of the house, putting Montrose below him. The lady of Skibo grew extremely angry at this insult to her guest, whom she was determined to treat with more respect, if possible, than if he had been at the height of his glory. She desired the colonel, in lofty tones, instantly to leave that place and give it up to the Marquis. The colonel flatly refused, and the lady, her wrath having now risen very high, without further ado seized upon the leg of mutton which had been placed before her on the table, and commenced belabouring the insolent Roundhead with all her strength. The attack was so unexpected that down came the colonel on his back on the floor, while the gravy ran into his eyes and stained his uniform, and the other soldiers flew about the room in great commotion, thinking

the loyal lady of Skibo intended to get up a rescue. But the lady gained her point, Colonel Houghton cried for mercy, and was at length allowed to get up from the floor bedabbled with gravy, when he sulkily betook himself to the lower seat. The hostess then replaced the leg of mutton in the dish, and gracefully led Montrose to the seat of honour which she had won for him, and the party proceeded to dine off the very joint that had proved such a useful weapon.

Once, too, the Marquis had nearly made his escape ; when they passed the night at the laird of Grange's house, the lady of the house dressed him in some of her own clothes, and he tried to slip past the guards. But a drunken soldier found them out and the scheme failed.

He was allowed to stop a few hours at Kinnaird, the dwelling of his father-in-law, the Earl of Southesk, and here, for the last time, he clasped in his arms his two sons, the young Lord Graham and Lord Robert. Two-and-twenty years ago he had entered the same house, a high-spirited boy of sixteen, to fetch his child-bride, Lady Magdalene ; everything he saw around him there must have reminded him sadly of past days of happiness and of friends whom he had lost, but now, as he pressed the weeping boys to his breast, he betrayed no signs of emotion before the guards who stood by, but calmly took leave of them. On the 18th of May, a warm spring afternoon, the Great Marquis and his captors arrived at the gate of Edinburgh. The Scottish Covenanters prepared for his reception in a manner which covers them with infamy, and only brings out in a brighter and stronger light the virtues of him whom they treated with such shameful indignity.

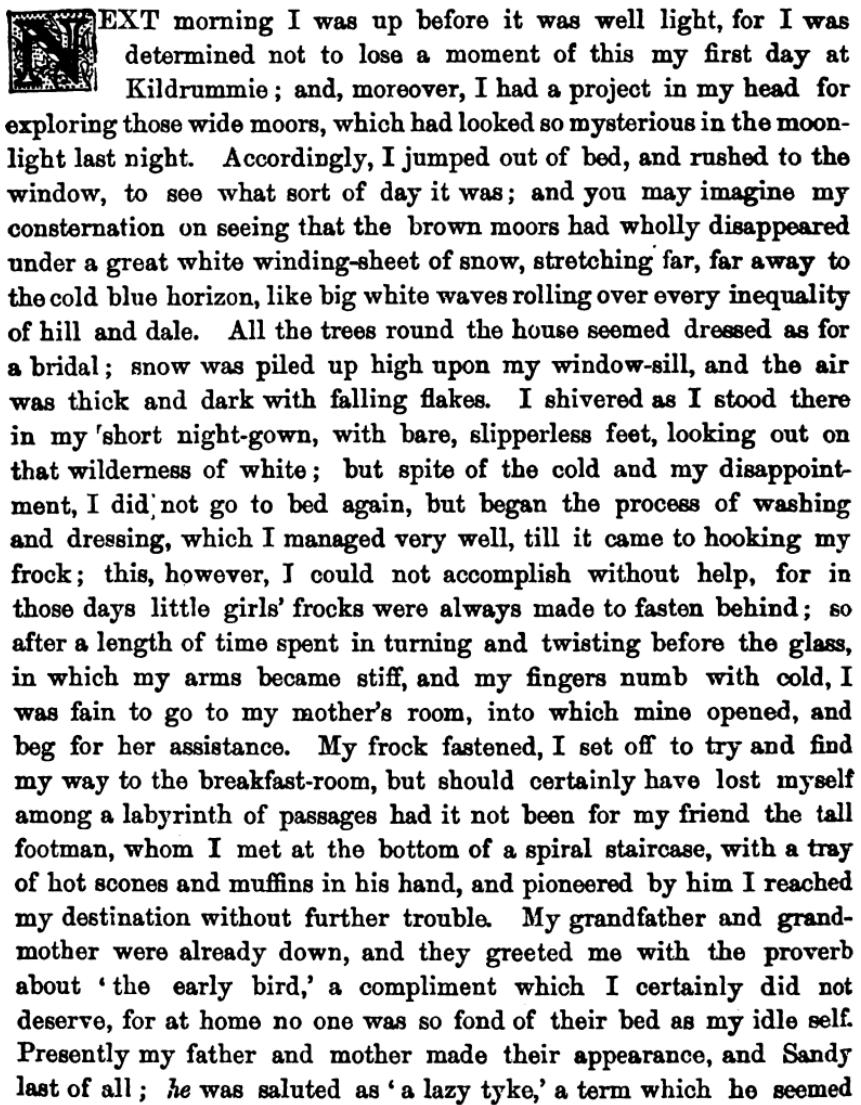
But Argyle now had his rival in his power, and he was resolved to gratify his revenge to the very utmost.

(*To be continued.*)



THE CHINA BOWL.

A REMINISCENCE FROM GRANDMAMMA'S POTPOURRI.

EXT morning I was up before it was well light, for I was determined not to lose a moment of this my first day at Kildrummie; and, moreover, I had a project in my head for exploring those wide moors, which had looked so mysterious in the moonlight last night. Accordingly, I jumped out of bed, and rushed to the window, to see what sort of day it was; and you may imagine my consternation on seeing that the brown moors had wholly disappeared under a great white winding-sheet of snow, stretching far, far away to the cold blue horizon, like big white waves rolling over every inequality of hill and dale. All the trees round the house seemed dressed as for a bridal; snow was piled up high upon my window-sill, and the air was thick and dark with falling flakes. I shivered as I stood there in my short night-gown, with bare, slipperless feet, looking out on that wilderness of white; but spite of the cold and my disappointment, I did not go to bed again, but began the process of washing and dressing, which I managed very well, till it came to hooking my frock; this, however, I could not accomplish without help, for in those days little girls' frocks were always made to fasten behind; so after a length of time spent in turning and twisting before the glass, in which my arms became stiff, and my fingers numb with cold, I was fain to go to my mother's room, into which mine opened, and beg for her assistance. My frock fastened, I set off to try and find my way to the breakfast-room, but should certainly have lost myself among a labyrinth of passages had it not been for my friend the tall footman, whom I met at the bottom of a spiral staircase, with a tray of hot scones and muffins in his hand, and pioneered by him I reached my destination without further trouble. My grandfather and grandmother were already down, and they greeted me with the proverb about 'the early bird,' a compliment which I certainly did not deserve, for at home no one was so fond of their bed as my idle self. Presently my father and mother made their appearance, and Sandy last of all; he was saluted as 'a lazy tyke,' a term which he seemed

to understand perfectly well, and took quite as a matter of course, but which set me cogitating all breakfast-time to discover what sort of a beast a 'tyke' could be ; later in our acquaintance, I asked him, and found out, to my great horror, that it meant a dog ; to be called a *dog*, how dreadful ! in my story-books the poor people who were so unfortunate as to be born in the land of Israel were always called individually, 'a dog of a Jew,' consequently I thought the term the height of opprobrium. After breakfast, Sandy and I were left alone to make each other's acquaintance—(I had by this time discovered that he also was a grandchild of the house of Kildrummie)—which he began by asking what I was called. Now I was very proud of my name, which was the joint property of my paternal grandparents, and, as I thought, an exceedingly fine one ; it was therefore in a voice which I intended should impress Master Sandy with a high idea of my own importance, that I informed him I was named 'Alexandrina Juliana Sabina.' Sandy burst out laughing. 'Eh, lass, what a name !' (he could speak English well enough, but much preferred the Scotch). 'Why, it's as long as the day and the Morrow ! Pray what clippin' o' that braw name do they call ye by ?' Now at home it was usually contracted into Bena ; *Bena*, such a name to be called by ! I hated it, particularly as my brothers were fond of transforming it into 'Jack and the Bean Stalk.' However, I wasn't going to let Sandy into this family secret, and I accordingly told him he might call me Sabina. 'Sabina ?' (how impudent the boy was !) 'Bena, Bee, Bean, Jack and the Bean Stalk, *Jack* !' (Oh, horror ! he had gone through the derivations, and had actually reached the same conclusion as my brothers !) 'Hurray ! I'll call you *Jack* !' It was not to be borne ; direfully offended, I got up and walked to the window ; but it was dull work watching those everlasting flakes ; and when presently Sandy came up, saying, 'I beg your pardon, Miss Sabina, come along and I'll show you over the house,' I was fain to accept the olive branch, and consent. We spent the whole morning in visiting the various parts of that rambling old mansion, and I found that in one respect, at least, I had not been mistaken, for it was 'china here, china there, china everywhere.' The walls of all the downstairs rooms were garnished with carved brackets, on each one of which stood some splendid vase, or fragile cup ; up and down the staircases, and along every gallery were niches for my grandfather's

precious relics; in fact, one could go nowhere without coming in contact with what might well be termed the *lares* and *penates* of Kildrummie. Sandy and I had by this time become such friends that when, after luncheon, he proposed a game at ball, I consented with the greatest alacrity. With this intent, we adjourned to a gallery adjoining the dining-room, which had the advantage of being more free from china than any other available place in the house. However, we were not safe even here, for before we had played many minutes a terrible crash behind the place where I was standing informed us that, in spite of all precautions, our doom had overtaken us. Whether it were Sandy's fault in having thrown the ball too high, or mine in failing to catch it, I cannot say, but the terrible consequences were all too plain: the ball had struck a splendid bowl of Dresden china which stood on a bracket at the end of the gallery, and had broken it to pieces. For full two minutes after hearing the fatal crash we stood staring at each other, our eyes round with horror and dismay; then Sandy broke the awful silence with these two impressive words—‘*Heart alive!*’ That was all he seemed capable of uttering, and we stood staring at each other for another two minutes, at the end of which my companion in misfortune recovered his power of speech. ‘Eh, lass, we've been and gone and done it!’—a very self-evident fact, but which, unfortunately, suggested no way out of the dilemma. ‘Oh, Sandy! what *shall* we do?’ I whispered in a broken voice; ‘who *is* to tell grandpapa?’ ‘Not *I*,’ returned Sandy, with a shrug of the shoulders; ‘I wouldn't tell him for a whole golden guinea—no, not if you were to give me a real Shetland pony and a double-barrelled gun!’ ‘But, Sandy, I daren't; oh, he would be so—so—’ Here my voice failed me, and I began to cry; the vision which my imagination conjured up, of those terrible eyes flaming with anger, was too dreadful to contemplate. Presently Sandy seemed to be struck with an idea,—‘I say, Bena, I don't see that we need tell him at all; let him find it out for himself.’ I remonstrated feebly, ‘But, Sandy, would that be right?’ ‘Bother!’ returned he, ‘I can't say; all I know is, that I daren't tell him for the life of me, nor you either, so what else can we do?’ This seemed to me unanswerable, so I gave in, and together we picked up the broken fragments and replaced them, as well as we could, in their former position on the bracket, trembling, like guilty things as we were, the whole time. This done, we

separated, Sandy betaking himself to some unknown haunt, while I stationed myself at the drawing-room window, and began watching the snowflakes once more. Presently I saw my mother rise from her chair by the fire, and come towards me; I turned hot and then cold, but she had only come to warn me that it was dressing-time, for this Christmas Eve was to be celebrated by a children's party, got up expressly in my honour, as grandmamma informed me. Oh, how I wished they hadn't planned any such thing! It was no happiness to me, indeed I never spent a more wretched evening in my life. Crowds of children arrived, to whom Sandy and I were expected to act as host and hostess. I do not know how he felt, but as for me, I wished them all at Timbuctoo. I am afraid they thought me very dull and disagreeable, but that unlucky china bowl came between me and every possibility of pleasure. We had games in plenty, but I could enjoy none of them; and when the bullet-pudding was brought in, and I was called upon to cut the first slice, my hand trembled so much that the leaden bullet on the top of the pyramid fell down directly. I could have cried with vexation at the burst of merriment which greeted this mishap; and I suppose it was owing to my woebegone looks that I was excused from searching for the bullet among the heap of flour and bringing it out with my teeth, as the rules of the game enjoin. Then there was snap-dragon, a sport for which I was wont to have a particular relish; but this evening, though there was a bountiful supply of almonds and raisins, and the blue fire blazed away in splendid style, I had not the heart to make one dash at the bowl, and could not even get up a smile, when one little fellow, thinking I was frightened, offered to divide his spoils with me. Well, it came to an end at last; the children departed, and I was free to go to bed. My grandmother's maid undressed me, for my mother was obliged to stay downstairs with the company, which I was rather glad of, for I did not wish to be alone with her. I did not say my prayers that night; I could not, for, uncomfortable as I was, I had no thoughts of confessing my fault, and to come before God in such a frame of mind was a mockery I dared not commit. So I went to bed, as I had never done before, without commanding myself to His Almighty keeping, unforgiven and unblessed. Oh, it was a wretched night! I could not go to sleep for long and long; and when I heard my mother

coming upstairs I shut my eyes and hid my head under the clothes, so that she might not speak to me; she thought I was asleep, and went away, shutting the door gently after her. For long after that I lay awake, tossing restlessly from side to side; and when at last I did fall asleep, my torments still continued worse than ever. In one of my dreams I realised with terrible vividness the saying about ‘a bull in a china shop.’ *I* was the unlucky animal, so heavy and awkward that every movement brought down a shower of broken crockery upon my devoted head. I awoke from that nightmare, only to be transformed, a short time afterwards, into the identical china bowl which haunted my waking thoughts. I dreamed that I was standing on the bracket at the end of the gallery, feeling—oh, so brittle! while my grandfather and Sandy were pelting me with balls, every one of which I felt must put an end to my existence. It came at last: I felt the blow, heard a crash, and awoke with a scream—to find myself lying on the floor, with the pale Christmas dawn stealing in at the window. What a Christmas Day that was! There was a bright hard frost, so we went to church in the morning, driving six miles through the deep snow, and did not get back till quite late in the afternoon. Sandy and I avoided each other by tacit consent, the guilty secret between us making us little desirous of each other’s company; so after our return, he went out to help the gardener to sweep the paths, and I whiled away the time with a book till the dressing-bell rang. My mother saw that there was something amiss, but set down my white cheeks and listless movements to fatigue, consequent on last night’s gaiety, and suggested that I should not come down that evening; but there was going to be a grand dinner-party, and my grandmother would not hear of my being left out, particularly as I declared that I was not ill at all. Accordingly I was dressed in my best, and took my place in the long row of guests seated on each side of the Kildrummie dining-table, who had met together to devour my grandfather’s roast beef and plum-pudding off the most delicately beautiful set of Sèvres china, that (as I heard a formal old gentleman remark to his delighted host) ‘greatly enhanced the flavour of viands, which, when served in such exquisite vessels, might well be termed the ambrosia of the gods.’ As for me, the mere sight of the china took away my appetite. During the whole of dinner I sat like one in a

dream, mechanically playing with my food, and saying yes and no, by turns, to an old lady, who, with the benevolent intention of trying, as she thought, to amuse a shy little girl, succeeded in tormenting me to such a degree that it was with the greatest difficulty I could prevent myself from telling her to hold her tongue. At length when dessert was placed on the table, and the servants had left the room, I was suddenly aroused from my dream by hearing my grandfather say to the above-mentioned old gentleman, ‘Well, Howburn, you called my roast beef and plum-pudding ambrosia a short time ago, now we’ll have the nectar, and that in such a bowl as I dare wager anything you’ve never drunk punch from before. Why, man, it has been in our family for more years than I can tell you: it’s of real old Dresden china, and was brought by one of my ancestors from Germany—a present from some Emperor or other—they tell me there’s not such another to be had for love or money.’ Then turning to me, ‘My little lass, do you think you could manage to fetch the bowl? It’s on a bracket at the end of the red gallery. Sandy here’ll go with you to hold the light, but I’d rather trust you than him with my bowl: he’s such a feckless laddie that he might break it, and I wouldn’t have that happen for all Dumfries. There’s a cannie little lass, take time, and don’t let it fall.’ If a thunderbolt had fallen in the middle of that dinner-table I could not have been more dumfounded; my heart seemed to stop, and all the blood in my body to rush tingling to my face. It was a horrible moment; I glanced imploringly at Sandy, but he seemed as much at his wits’ end as myself. I tried to speak, but not a word would come; finally, *faute de mieux*, I slipped from my place, and walked towards the door leading to the gallery, Sandy following with an unlighted candle in his hand. ‘Sandy, Sandy, you’re going without a light!’ shouted my grandfather. ‘Why, what ails the lad, is he daft?’ Sandy walked straight back, lighted the candle without a word, and followed me into the gallery. Slowly we walked down the long corridor, spinning out the time as much as we could, for we knew there was no escape from the terrible punishment we had brought upon ourselves; the door at the other end was locked, so there was nothing for it but to meet our doom in the best way we could. We stood before the bracket for a moment, looking at each other in silence with pale faces and trembling limbs; then Sandy whispered, ‘Come,

lass, there's no help for it; let's get it over; it's horrid, but it'll be all the same a hundred years hence.' He meant this to be consolatory, but it was cold comfort; however, as he said, there was no help for it, so with a shudder I took the fragments of broken china from their resting-place, and slowly we set forth on our return to the dining-room, feeling as though we were on our way to execution, Sandy going before with the lighted candle, and I following after with the broken bowl. Oh, the awful business of entering the dining-room! We did it though—somehow, I cannot tell you how, and found ourselves standing before my grandfather. I looked up for one moment—saw my grandmother's pitying countenance, my mother's grieved, nervous look, my father's annoyance, and the two long rows of curious eyes bent upon us—then I dropped mine, covered with shame, and in an agony of terror, for, dreadful as it was to feel all those eyes upon one, I had seen something worse—my grandfather's face! never shall I forget it as long as I live! For several moments perfect silence reigned through the room: I could hear the clock ticking with awful distinctness, and my heart beat as though it would choke me; then my grandfather spoke. 'Did you children break that bowl?' 'Yes,' answered Sandy in a low voice.—'It was not done now, or we should have heard the crash; when did it happen?' I tried to speak, but could not, and it was again Sandy who answered, 'Yesterday.'—'And you wished to hide it from me: you broke the bowl and then put the pieces together, hoping I should not find it out till you were gone. Is this so?' 'Yes.'—'Am I to understand that only you were concerned in it, Alexander?' I felt I *must* speak now; with a desperate effort I faltered out, 'Oh, no, grandfather! it was as much my fault; we—we—' I broke down sobbing. Again there was silence: my grandfather's eyes actually blazed with wrath; I felt as though they were burning me. 'Poor lambs!' interposed the old lady; 'come, Kildrummie, you mustn't be hard on them, accidents will happen.' 'Deceit is no accident,' said my grandfather so sternly that the well-meaning but injudicious old lady was silenced. For a minute longer we stood like trembling criminals under the terrible eyes of our judge; then my grandfather spoke again, 'Go out of my sight, and don't come into my presence again till I send for you; I little thought that ever grandchild of mine would act a lie.' How we got out of the

room, I don't know to this day; but when my mother came upstairs about an hour after (my grandfather would not allow her to go sooner), she found me crouching on the floor of my room, in a perfect agony of sobbing. Gently she took me in her arms, sat down on a low chair by the fire, and rocked me to and fro till my passionate grief had spent itself. Then she talked to me gently and kindly of my fault, showed me how great it was in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and pointed out to me into what sin one may fall by the want of a little moral courage. Then she undressed me, and I knelt down by her and said my prayers, or rather she said them, and I repeated them after her as well as I could, for I was still breathless with sobbing. Oh! what new meaning was there in the words of the collect which I was accustomed to say every night with my evening prayers—

“O Lord, we beseech Thee, absolve Thy people from their offences; that through Thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen.”

“My grandfather did not send for us till the eve of our leaving Kildrummie, two days after. Sandy and I obeyed the summons with beating hearts. On the table lay the fragments of the broken bowl; but even in presence of these witnesses of our fault, my grandfather was much kinder than we had dared to expect. ‘Bairns,’ he said, ‘I hope you have had a lesson never to conceal anything you have done wrong. Be brave, speak out, and never try to hide a fault by mean, cowardly deceit. You see the fragments of this bowl; I mean to leave them between you in my will.’ (which he did; how they all came into my possession and were cemented together, as you now see them, I have not at present time to tell)—‘my intention in so purposing,’ continued my grandfather, ‘is, that you may always bear in mind this maxim: When you have a disagreeable thing to do, do it *at once*, never put it off; unpleasant as it may be, delay will not make the doing easier. It is a true proverb which says, ‘Better a finger off than aye waggin’.’”

AUSTIN CLARE.